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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

KI 98

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**HISTORIC United Shopping Tower; Northwestern Mutual Insurance Building
AND/OR COMMON Olympic Tower**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

217 Pine Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Washington

CODE

COUNTY

King

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Securities Financial, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 2188

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98111

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

King County Administration Building

STREET & NUMBER

500 Fourth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

City of Seattle Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE

1979

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Urban Conservation, 400 Yesler Building

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT

☐ GOOD

☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The United Shopping Tower is located on the southwest corner of Third Avenue and Pine Street in the "uptown" area of Seattle's central business district. This commercial and retail section developed as businesses moved north from the original center of trade in the Pioneer Square area. In the immediate vicinity, other buildings of note stand as distinguished neighbors of the Shopping Tower--one block to the west is the ten-story Standard Furniture building of 1907 by A. Warren Gould, on the adjacent property to the south stands the Fischer Studio Building of 1912 by Bebb & Mendel, and John Graham's Bon Marche department store of 1929 is located on the northeast corner of the same intersection.

During the first decades of this century the southwest corner was occupied by the Federal Hotel, a simple, three-story, brick-faced block, which was demolished in 1928. In January of 1929 construction was begun on the United Shopping Tower, one of the finest local examples of an Art Deco commercial building.

At ground level the building occupies the entire corner, its retail facades extending directly to the property line. Two more stories complete the large rectangular lower block of retail/commercial space. Above this three-story base rises an office tower of ten additional stories with a setback at the twelfth floor forming corner terraces. Vertical emphasis is enhanced by the graceful uninterrupted piers and narrow window mullions and by the recessed, vertically ribbed spandrels. The large, Chicago-style windows filling the entire space between vertical supports give an airiness and lightness to the tower, while the Art Deco ornament enriches the wall surfaces and pier caps at the polygonal crown of the building.

The Shopping Tower is a reinforced concrete structure comprising a basement and thirteen stories. The below-grade basement of 14,500 sq. ft. extends beneath the sidewalks on Third Avenue and Pine Street through an easement common for Seattle's downtown buildings. The three-story base, with 12,200 sq. ft. on each floor, has a frontage of 113 feet on Third Avenue and 108 feet on Pine Street. The original plans provided for seven retail shops at street level with an additional small newspaper/tobacco shop off the spacious lobby located in the northwest corner of the ground floor. Recessed entries were provided for each shop, with large plate glass display windows in bronze Kawneer settings above base facings of marble. Three-part transoms surmounted by ornamental metal cresting filled the width of each bay above the shop fronts.

The retail spaces at street level have undergone numerous changes over the years as tenants' needs altered interior arrangements and entrances and changing tastes dictated the application of modern veneers and signs over the original facades. The present owner intends to remove unsightly accretions and renovate the shop fronts.

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In the mid-1950s the lobby was remodeled, eliminating the suspended plaster ceiling and the bronze elevator doors with their ornamental Art Deco panels. Additional retail space was incorporated in the lobby area, making the public entrance smaller.

Above the first story the building is remarkably well preserved. Recent cleaning and tuck pointing have returned the exterior to its original appearance, and today the tower stands crisp and white in the uptown skyline.

The Third Avenue (east) and Pine Street (north) elevations are faced with black-spotted, cream enamel terra cotta produced by Gladding, McBean & Company. Above the second story an ornamental frieze of this same terra cotta with incised stylized floral patterns encircles the two main facades. This decorative band marks the top of the original base; however, in 1939 the third story was expanded to the dimensions of the lower two stories, its fenestration and detailing matching those of the fourth to eleventh stories of the tower.

Above the third story, the Pine Street facade of the tower continues as a vertical extension of the four central bays of the base. The original setback of one bay at the east and west was modified in 1941 when an additional bay from the fourth to twelfth floors was added on the west. This addition on the alley side of the building is hardly noticeable since the design duplicated the existing bays and the same terra cotta facing was used. The tower is also set back three bays (55 feet) from the southern edge of the base, allowing ample light to reach the south elevation and affording a view of the tower as a free-standing element in the still relatively low-rise skyline of this section of the business district.

Above the eleventh floor windows, a wide terra cotta frieze of stylized flower and leaf motifs forms a parapet between the major piers, breaking out into two narrow polygonal balconies between the central piers of the north elevation. Corner piers are capped by more geometric ornament at the tenth floor level, while the central piers rise uninterrupted to the twelfth story where their flat surfaces erupt into clusters of vertical ribs framing tall arched window openings. Above these windows, large-scale combined floral and geometric terra cotta ornament continues and culminates the decorative theme of the building.

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The polygonal crown of the tower is created by the angled corners of the twelfth and thirteenth stories, forming triangular terraces at all but the southwest corner. The northeast and northwest terraces are joined by a narrow passage, forming a kind of loggia with the small projecting balconies on the north elevation. These amenities, plus the substantially higher ceiling height (17 feet vs. 11½ feet for the typical office floor), and unobstructed views in all directions, makes the twelfth floor the most desirable space in the building. The original plans indicate that a tearoom was proposed for this space, but it was never installed. A photographer occupied the twelfth floor during the early 1930s, until it became the location of the executive offices of the Northwestern Mutual Fire Insurance Company in 1933. A tearoom was installed on the eighth floor in 1930, designed by the locally prominent architects, William J. Bain and Lionel Pries.

The thirteenth, or penthouse, floor houses mechanical equipment. Light is provided by small windows at the north and south and skylights in the roof. Its unadorned exterior wall surfaces seem bland, though neon lights once encircled its parapet edge and may be placed there again. A decorative monogram — ST — is located just below the top of the parapet between the two small windows on the north elevation. This is the only remaining indication of the building's original designation of Shopping Tower.

The original drawings indicate that a tall mast was always intended to complete the tower's silhouette. A graceful 10-foot high copper base over a concrete pedestal was to have a 30-foot tall pipe pole surmounted by a zinc ball of 16 inches diameter. It was not until 1937, however, that a steel mast of somewhat heavier design was erected, its lighted globe serving as an airplane warning beacon. Maintenance problems caused the mast to be removed in later years. In a practice common during the 1930s, the crown of the tower was dramatically illuminated by floodlights on the terraces.

The building is presently being rehabilitated by a new owner after standing vacant for a short time in the late 1970s. The exterior terra cotta facing has been cleaned and plans are being formulated to renovate or adapt the street level facades depending on the amount of original material found beneath the present shop fronts. Interiors are being renovated for modern office space, with all mechanical systems being brought up to code requirements. The old freight elevator has been removed and a new heating system installed.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1929

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Henry Bittman

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The United Shopping Tower is significant to the city of Seattle as a particularly fine example of an Art Deco commercial building located in the central business district. Constructed in 1929, the tower is representative of a spirit of financial enterprise and commercial expansion which prevailed in Seattle during the decade of the 1920s. The erection of a number of high-rise buildings in the period 1928-1931 dramatically changed the scale of downtown and focused attention on the new skyscraper forms which had been evolving in New York City. The Shopping Tower is neither the largest nor the most ornately decorated of Seattle's Art Deco buildings, but it remains a fine and well-preserved example of the style in its regional expression in the Pacific Northwest.

The site of the tower, at the southwest corner of Third Avenue and Pine Street, had been occupied during the early decades of the twentieth century by the Federal Hotel, a three-story brick building with shops at the street level. By the late twenties, however, the property had become part of the growing real estate holdings of one of the city's most enterprising young capitalists, Joseph Gottstein, a member of the many branched Gottstein family whose forebears had left Poland in the mid-nineteenth century and settled in South Dakota after the Civil War. Joe's father had arrived in Seattle in 1879 with enough money from pack peddling to purchase several saloons on First Avenue. In a short time he became the largest liquor wholesaler in the northwest, as well as the owner of a stable of racehorses. Joe Gottstein was born in 1891 at the family home on First Hill and as a young man was sent east to acquire an education and social polish at Philips Exeter Academy and Brown University. Returning to Seattle in the early 1920s, he joined in an informal partnership with William Edris, and the two young entrepreneurs set the local business community buzzing with their audacious investment deals.

A photograph accompanying an article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* of October 28, 1928 shows the two young capitalists in long overcoats and snappy fedoras, holding cigarettes and smiling confidently at each other, while the headline proclaims: "Two Youthful Investors Mold City's Future and Make Fortune." The newspaper article lists a number of downtown properties, including the Shopping Tower site, which they had acquired in the previous few years, and lauds their boldness in taking "a considerable part of downtown Seattle in their capable hands" and their success in "changing the entire aspect of the city's business

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center." The enthusiasms of the time is colloquially expressed by Gottstein when he is asked to explain their plan of operation:

Why the town just can't keep from going ahead, can it?
Well, somebody's going to make money on these big deals.
Too many cities wait for outside capital to come in and
clean up all the gravy. We've got confidence in Seattle's
future, and there isn't anything else to it except to buy
'em and sell 'em.

Although Joe Gottstein made his fortune in real estate investments, he is probably best remembered for opening Longacres racetrack in 1933, and his name is most often associated with horse breeding and racing in Washington State.

The developer of the site which Gottstein and Edris owned was the investment firm of Drumheller, Ehrlichman & White. Founded in 1921 as Drumheller & Ehrlichman, by 1929 the firm controlled eleven corporations which constituted the "United Group." In addition to providing diverse investment and insurance services, they had already constructed the 18-story Medical and Dental Building (1924) and were in the process of erecting the 23-story Exchange Building (1929). The young company had expanded rapidly during the twenties due to the energy and resourcefulness of its two founders. Roscoe M. Drumheller came from a well-known pioneering eastern Washington family. His father Jesse Drumheller, was one of the biggest landowners in the Walla Walla area, where Roscoe was born in 1882. He was educated at Whitman Academy and Willamette University and his first venture into the business world was in real estate and insurance. In 1915 he was appointed collector of U.S. Customs for Washington State and held that post until he founded the investment firm of Drumheller & Ehrlichman in 1921.

While Drumheller was chairman of the board, Ben B. Ehrlichman, originally vice president, became president of the firm in 1925 at the age of 30. By 1929 he was an official in ten other financial concerns with interests throughout the Pacific Northwest. A native of Minneapolis, Ehrlichman had come to Washington at an early age. His family settled first in Tacoma, but moved to Seattle in 1907. Upon graduating from Broadway High School, he immediately entered the banking community, first in Seattle and later in Tacoma. His partnership with Drumheller and the rapid expansion of their firm made him an important force in the development of Seattle during the 1920's.

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As architect for the Shopping Tower, the developers chose the local firm of Henry Bittman, which specialized in the design of commercial buildings. Henry Bittman himself was a colorful figure in Seattle's architectural community. He was born in 1882 in New York City, where his father was a well-known interior designer. After graduating from Pratt Institute he had further training in Chicago, probably at the Armour Institute of Technology. Arriving in the Seattle area about 1905, he began practicing as a structural engineer. With his forceful and talented wife, Jessie, who later became a renowned horticulturist, he settled into a bohemian lifestyle in the old mining town of Newcastle. Later they moved to an eclectic Tudor house which Bittman designed in the then suburban area of Wallingford, where Jessie could have ample space for her large and impressive garden. Having given up the bohemian lifestyle of his youth, Bittman now savored the refined life of a cultured gentleman. He was noted as a patron of the arts and original works were specially commissioned to be displayed at lavish entertainments given in the big Tudor house.

In 1906-07 Bittman had formed a brief partnership with the architect William Kingsley, but after this was dissolved he again practiced alone as a structural engineer. In later years, as his business expanded, he employed more staff and operated as an architectural and engineering firm, but always under his own single name. One of his most talented associates was the architect Harold Adams, who in temperament and personal habits was the exact opposite of Henry Bittman. It was undoubtedly Adams who was the designer of the Shopping Tower and his creative hand can be seen in the original drawings of the ornament and other details of the building.

The financial scene was rather gloomy when the Shopping Tower was completed. Although the full impact of the Depression did not hit Seattle until a few years after the stock market crash of 1929, nonetheless, Drumheller, Ehrlichman & White had some difficulties in renting space, as well as other financial problems. In 1932 the lease on the property was taken over by E. M. Greenwood, who managed the building for the next 47 years. In January of 1933 the Northwestern Mutual Fire Association, the country's largest fire insurance company which had been founded in 1901, moved into the building. Its executive offices and board room were housed on the terraced twelfth floor. The company's name was later changed to Northwestern Mutual Insurance Co. and, as the principal tenant, it gave its name to the tower for over 40 years. In 1974, Northwestern Mutual became the Unigard Insurance

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Group and moved its corporate headquarters to the new Financial Center, although a small office was retained in the tower until 1976. The tower was renamed the Insurance Center in the hope of attracting independent insurance agents as tenants. However, the building was recently purchased by a subsidiary of Olympic Savings and Loan Assn.; the executive offices and board room of that institution will shortly be installed on the twelfth floor, and a branch office will occupy the corner space at street level. The building has been renamed the Olympic Tower.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Seattle South

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5 minute

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 549810 527303 20
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 2 and 3, Block 23, A.A. Denny's Third Addition to the Plat of Seattle.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Shirley L. Courtois

ORGANIZATION

The Conservation Company

DATE

March 10, 1980

STREET & NUMBER

1955 Sixth Avenue West

TELEPHONE

(206) 284-8556

CITY OR TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington 98119

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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Bittman, Herbert J., nephew of Henry Bittman. Personal interview,
February 26, 1980

Building Permit Records. City of Seattle Building Department, Municipal
Building.

Daily Journal of Commerce, May 5, 1977, p.5.

Greenwood, E. M., lessee and later owner of tower. Telephone interview,
February 21, 1980.

Halpin, James. "That Sporting Life at Longacres," *Seattle*, Vol.3,
no.29, August 1966.

Kreisman, Lawrence, *Art Deco Seattle*, Allied Arts of Seattle, 1979.

Original drawings of Shopping Tower, held at offices of Bittman,
Sanders, Hasson & Assoc., Seattle.

Sanders, Dean, architect and longtime associate of Henry Bittman.
Personal interview, February 26, 1980.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, "Two Youthful Investors Mold City's Future
and Make Fortune," October 28, 1928, p.25.

Shapes of Clay (Gladding, McBean & Co., San Francisco), Vol.6, no.1,
March 1930.



ROGER SCHREIBER PHOTOGRAPHY

4411 STONE WAY NORTH

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

(206) 634-2420

Shopping Tower
Seattle, Washington
Photographer: Roger Schriber,
February 1980
Negative located at Roger Schriber
Photography, Seattle, Washington
View Looking Southwest
North & East Facades
1 of 1

1579 III NW
(SHILSHOLE BAY)

548000m E. R. 3 E. R. 4 E.

EVERETT 27 MI.
EDMONDS 14 MI.

EVERETT 27 M
MOUNTLAKE TERRACE 15 M
20'

5274000m.N

BM
13

5273

SEATTLE-PORT ANGELES

T. 25 N.

T. 24 N.

UNITED SHOPPING TOWER
Seattle, Washington

UTM REFERENCE:

Zone 10 549810 Easting
 5273018 Northing

5272

5271

35'

5269

WEST WATERWAY

EAST WATERWAY

Seattle South
7.5 min
Photorevised 1973